

Listing of Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A ~~substantially rigid~~ thimble adapted to extend ~~up~~ over the first knuckle position of a single one of a user's fingers, about ~~its~~ the finger's full circumference, said thimble comprising a rigid material to prevent bending of the user's finger ~~so as to assist the user in maintaining a substantially straight finger~~ at the first knuckle position, the thimble and having a needle contacting surface with one or more indents between the tip of the finger and a position adjacent or past the first knuckle position, said needle contacting surface indents being configured to secure a tip of a needle disposed in one of said indents.

2. (Currently Amended) A ~~substantially rigid~~ thimble adapted to extend ~~up~~ over the first knuckle position of a user of a single one of a user's fingers, about ~~its~~ the finger's full circumference, so as to form a close tolerance push fit over the first knuckle, the thimble comprising a rigid material to prevent bending of the user's finger thereby bracing the knuckle against substantial bending; the thimble having a needle contacting surface with one or more indents between the tip of the finger and a position adjacent or past the first knuckle position, said needle contacting surface indents being configured to secure a tip of a needle disposed in one of said indents.

3. (Original) A thimble in accordance with claim 1 hereof being open at both ends so that the tip of the finger is not covered.

4. (Original) A thimble in accordance with claim 1 hereof having a multiplicity of indents in the needle contacting surface; the indents extending between a position adjacent the tip of the finger and a position adjacent the first knuckle.

5. (Original) A thimble in accordance with claim 1 hereof being open-ended and between 20 and 45 mm in length.

6. (Original) A thimble in accordance with claim 1 hereof being open-ended and between 25 and 45 mm in length.

7. (Original) A thimble in accordance with claim 1 hereof wherein the inside of the front face of thimble substantially flattened in order to assist in keying the thimble to the finger thereby preventing rotation thereabout.

8. (Original) A thimble in accordance with claim 1 hereof wherein one or more of the inside faces of the thimble are substantially flattened in order to assist in keying the thimble to the finger thereby preventing rotation thereabout.

9. (Original) A thimble in accordance with claim 1 hereof which tapers inwardly along its length as it extends towards the finger tip.

10. (Original) A method of quilting utilising a thimble in accordance with claim 1 hereof as a brace in order to ensure that the first knuckle position of the thimble bearing finger used to push the needle is not bent more than 25 degrees.

11. (Original) A method of quilting utilising a thimble in accordance with claim 1 hereof as a brace in order to ensure that the first knuckle position of the thimble bearing finger used to push the needle is not bent more than 15 degrees.

12. (Original) A method of quilting utilising a thimble in accordance with claim 1 hereof to facilitate use of long needles with multiple stitches loaded thereon.